

SEEING AND CREATING

An Artist Looks At Nature

by GRACE M. HOGG*

Travelling in Saskatchewan is a very exciting experience. Many beautiful places offer great opportunities to the nature lover and artist. To observe, to examine and to study all forms of living things is a pleasant, lifelong adventure. When the eye of the mind is opened, the vision is enlarged and enjoyment of nature's gifts becomes greater. This sharpened visual ability is enriched in all travelling experiences.

Seeing nature with all of one's senses is different from simply a quick glance. As one hikes along a prairie trail many senses are aroused. From the waving of grasses in the wind, one experiences the sensation of swaying to and fro. The wind making music in the grasses arouses one's sense of hearing. Then a person is spurred on to interpret feelings of the scene. All the surroundings glow with pulsating vitality and many fascinating colours are everywhere to be seen and enjoyed. It is this pulsating and colourful life that one wishes to become involved in. Sketching from nature is one kind of involvement.

Nature lovers can add another dimension to their list of activities by sketching. A large sketch-book, water-colours, a bottle of water, a large brush (size 12), and an open, seeing mind are all the requirements for a sketching trip.

It is surprising how much more an inquisitive eye sees, when looking at nature for its shapes and colours, rather than to identify the plant or animal. A winding path with its grassy edges may suggest curved and straight lines. In flat or sloping fields, one observes a variety of lines. Fluffy clouds are masses of subtle colours that sometimes display whirling shapes and lines in the sky. Along the bank of a creek one sees another intermingling of lines and colours. An old tree which has fallen

into the water may suggest straight and broken lines. Noticing the rushing water, a person becomes aware of a pattern of wavy lines and sparkling colours. Countless numbers of flowers in brilliant array, in fascinating shapes and designs, are everywhere to study and enjoy. Even sketching from one's garden in winter can be quite fascinating. The sketches of old weeds and forms in the garden were made with a brush and india ink.



Weeds

Spontaneity and freshness are valuable qualities in sketching; these lie in the artist's conception and performance. Using a large brush for painting inspires spontaneity and encourages a freer, more creative response. Each sketch is a new experience, a bringing of the artist into a vital connection with nature. As the viewer half closes her eyes and looks at the scene, trees become unified with sky and fields; thus a harmony is obtained. Likewise in sketches, harmony of colours, lines and shapes is used to create a picture.

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the garden in winter.

The painter selects and mixes water-colours to obtain various pleasing combinations. Then with brushfuls of paint colours are applied on the paper in interesting shapes and masses. An area of paper is covered with colours in such a way that the disposition of lights and darks is pleasing to the eye. Movement in a picture may be expressed by variety of lines (curved, diagonal, horizontal, vertical, etc.); also by advancing (warm reds and yellows) and receding (cool blues and greys) colours. The artist selects and eliminates colours, shapes and lines from a scene to compose a sketch or painting which will be an individual impression and expression of the seeing process.

Many quick sketches in colour and pencil, in line and colour, or just in line can be made from a single scene, each presenting a different involvement with

the creative activity of sketching. An artist becomes fascinated by relating form with form and colour with colour. Experimenting with colour to obtain unusual original effects can also be intriguing. One's imagination is stimulated as each colour is selected and applied on the paper. Soon the artist realizes the sketch or painting is a unified whole. One feels nothing more can be added and the creating experience is finished for that picture.

A person may sketch for pure enjoyment, or sketches may be made with the intention of capturing an idea, meant for permanent form as in a finished water-colour painting. Each sketching trip can be a joyous, invigorating event in seeing and creating. These wonderful experiences can be shared with those who view the finished sketches and paintings.